

The Welsh Pioneer Settlers of Carbondale, PA and Two Welsh "Firsts" for the Pioneer City

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The Delaware and Hudson Canal Company's Gravity Railroad from Carbondale (the "pioneer" or oldest incorporated city in Lackawanna County, PA) to Honesdale opened on October 29, 1829. In the period 1829-1831, the D&H obtained coal by (1) quarrying coal from exposed surface outcrops, or (2) establishing levels, drifts (a mine opening is driven directly into the coal bed itself at a slight *upward* inclination) and slopes (a mine opening is driven directly into the coal bed itself at a slight *downward* inclination).

The first coal that was mined in Carbondale was from a level, the opening of which was in the bed of the river on the site where, in later years, the foot of the Davies plane / No. 28, would be located. The water in the river was diverted from its channel and the level was run into the hill. The coal was run out in wheelbarrows. This was called Inghram's level. In 1829, a tunnel was driven on the opposite side of the river at old No. 1 drift. This drift was worked till 1857. No. 2 drift, west of No. 1, was opened in 1830.

When it was no longer possible for the D&H to mine enough coal to fulfill its market needs by means of these early levels, drifts, and slopes, the decision was made to establish mine shafts and to carry on deep underground mining.

A shaft is a vertical opening from the surface, penetrating one or more coal beds and intervening rock strata. A shaft is usually divided into two or more compartments. A typical shaft has two hoistways: one through which the loaded mine cars are brought to the surface in cages, the other in which empty cars are lowered in the same manner.

To secure the expertise needed to establish shaft mines, the D&H recruited, in 1830, twenty mining families from Wales to teach the company how to establish shaft mines and to conduct deep underground anthracite coal mining.

Those 20 Welsh families left Wales on May 6, 1830, arriving in New York on July 2, and in Carbondale on July 14, 1830. They provided the expertise needed by the D&H to establish and to work deep underground anthracite shaft mines.

The first deep underground shaft mine in the Lackawanna Valley was opened in Carbondale in June, 1831 by Archbald Law, first mining engineer of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, on a site just west of what was, in the twentieth century, the D&H Seventh Avenue crossing in Carbondale.

In October/November of the following year, 1832, a second large party of Welsh miners and their families arrived in Carbondale, bringing with them, it goes without saying, their technological expertise and knowledge of successful anthracite mining. The men of this party

numbered about seventy, and upon their arrival here began to work for the D&H. These seventy Welshmen were nearly all married and, of course, brought their wives and children with them. As such, the population of the mining settlement, the village of Carbondale, was increased by nearly two hundred.

These Welsh pioneers were soon followed by many thousands of Welsh men and women and their families who came here to work in the anthracite coal fields and to begin new lives for themselves.

Associated with these pioneer Welsh settlers and their descendants in Carbondale and in the Lackawanna Valley are two very interesting and important "firsts" in the history of the Welsh in America.

First Eisteddfod in America

On Christmas day, 1850, in Carbondale, the first eisteddfod to be held in America took place. Among the literarians and musicians who attended, the pioneer eisteddfodwyr of America, were Daniel Davies, Rev. John Moses, Thomas Eynon, Rev. Thomas J. Phillips (Cyw Ionawr), and Edward Jones.

In the years thereafter, an eisteddfod was held regularly on Christmas Day in Carbondale. The laudable and praiseworthy object of these annual Welsh festival gatherings on Christmas Day was announced as "the cultivation of Welsh literature, the art of speaking and writing, and the development of musical talent among our citizens, by the distribution of prizes to those who excel in these various branches of science and art."

First Ivorite Lodge in America

In the fall of 1853, a few patriotic Welshmen, inspired by a praiseworthy and benevolent sentiment, organized an Ivorite lodge in Carbondale—the germ of "The Philanthropic Order of True Ivorites" in America. The Ivoriads held their first celebration in America in Carbondale in August 1855 with a procession and other public exercises. The procession paraded through the principal streets of Carbondale, under the direction of Thomas Voyle, Esquire, as chief marshal, aided by Edward Roberts, Esquire, assistant.

The following description of that procession is given in an article ("Ivorites"), that was published in the *Carbondale Transcript and Lackawanna Journal* on August 10, 1855, page 2:

". . . We were highly pleased with the decorum manifested by the members in the procession, their unique and uniform dress, consisting of black frock coat, white pants, white gloves and cravats, with the regularity in marching, to the sweet music from the Carbondale Brass Band. . . they paraded through the principal streets of our city, under the direction of Thomas Voyle, Esq. as chief marshal, aided by Edward Roberts, Esq., assistant. Mr. Voyle looked well mounted on his beautiful charger, a true type and representative of the renowned Ivor-the-Little, or *Ivor-back*. After the parade, they adjourned to the Welsh Baptist Church, where suitable and appropriate addresses were delivered, on the origin, progress and destiny of the Ivorites."

"The meeting was presided over with great dignity by Robert S. Roberts, Esq., President of the Order--and the following gentlemen addressed the large and intelligent audience: Enoch Jones, ex-president, Thomas M. Jones, ex-vice-president, Wm. E. Jones, John Jenkins, Sen., Thomas J. Phillips, Evan Lumley, Llewelyn Hughes, Rev David Williams, and Rev. William Evans; and from what we learn of the proceedings, some of the addresses were characterized by deep historical research—ardent patriotism, and a deep and abiding love for the language, mountains and valleys of their native Kymru. . . We wish success to the Ivorites; may their little Lodge in Carbondale become the mighty Oak, whose branches shall extend over every Welsh settlement in America, and bear fruit an hundred fold, in propagating the principles of Brotherly Love, Charity, and Truth."

The Philanthropic Order of True Ivorites, in which there were three degrees—Blue, White, and Gold--was one of many friendly and mutual societies that sprang up in Wales during the nineteenth century. The golden years of the group were between 1840 and 1870.

From the article by William VanBuskirk that was published in the July 1, 2006 issue of *Ninnau*, on page 11, we learn that "The Ivorite Order, whose motto was: 'Cyfeillgarwch, Cariad a Gwirionedd (Friendship, Love and Truth), was established in Wrexham in 1836 by Thomas Robert Jones ('Gwerfulyn', 1802-1856) and was the only society which was exclusively Welsh. / The Ivorites were named after Ifor Hael (Ivor the Generous) who was the patron of Dafydd ap Gwilym (David son of William), the 14th century poet, who lived at Bassaleg, Monmouthshire."

VanBuskirk credits Benjamin Hughes (1824-1900), one of the most important figures in the history of Scranton's Hyde Park section, as the organizer of the Ivorites' Society in Scranton, and notes that Hughes was its first American Grand President, a position in which he served for nine years.

VanBuskirk also notes that Hughes "was thought of as the father of the American Ivorites." Based on the article, referenced above, that was published in the *Carbondale Transcript and Lackawanna Journal* on August 10, 1855, we can affirm that that honor (the father of the Ivorites in America) goes not to Benjamin Hughes but to the patriotic Welshmen who organized an Ivorite lodge in the city of Carbondale in the fall of 1853, that lodge being the germ of the order in America.

The Order of True Ivorites, though conducted in English since 1935, was reduced by 1967 to one men's and four women's lodges, and disbanded in 1974.

From VanBuskirk's informative article that was published in *Ninnau* in 2006, we learn that "Recently, the National Welsh-American Foundation adopted an honorary Ivorite degree. This milestone has been established to recognize noteworthy individuals and institutions whose personal activities bring honor to the overall Welsh tradition and heritage, most especially those that reflect efforts exemplifying the motto of the first Ivorites: Friendship, Love and Truth. Upon nomination and election by the board of directors of the National Welsh-American Foundation, these recognized individuals will be celebrated and distinguished by public acknowledgement and elevation to the honorary American Ivorite."

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